

# Smart Growth Newsline

The Latest in Planning and Development from Massachusetts and Around the Nation

Office for Commonwealth Development

## Five communities adopt 40R, others in pipeline

Plymouth, Norwood, North Reading and Dartmouth have all approved smart growth districts under Chapter 40R at town meeting in the last several weeks, and the Chelsea city council also blessed dense residential development in return for cash incentives.

Under Chapter 40R, cities and towns receive \$3,000 per home and up to \$600,000 in a lump-sum payment for establishing special districts for dense residential development, in town centers, downtowns, near transit where available, on under-utilized industrial land. Twenty percent of the new housing must be affordable.

Under the companion legislation Chapter 40S, the additional cost of educating children who move into the new districts is also covered by the state.

The state Legislature passed Chapter 40R in 2004, though the regulations were issued in 2005. Governor Mitt Romney signed the Chapter 40S legislation the day before Thanksgiving last year. About two-dozen Massachusetts communities have been investigating 40R and 40S, but this spring has seen the first actual approvals.

Each community now goes through the final stages of a process with the Department of Housing and Community Development to make the districts official and receive the funding, upon occupation of the new homes.

Plymouth attracted attention for its support at town meeting in May for the Cordage Park project, a rehabilitation of a former rope-making

factory campus into 671 new homes, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and near the Old Colony commuter rail line. The project, as a 40R district, could put over \$2 million into town coffers.

Norwood town meeting also passed a 40R district for a vacant property near the town center consisting of a church and two rectory buildings, which will be turned into 15 new homes – 13 one-or-two bedroom homes and two three-bedroom homes.

In North Reading, town leaders gained approval for a 46-acre 40R district on the J.T. Berry state hospital campus, which can accommodate up to 434 new homes.

In Dartmouth, a project known as Lincoln Park, with 173 townhouse homes, 72 age-restricted homes, 63 apartments and a mixed-use component of 5 commercial buildings totaling 56,000 square feet, all on 16 acres of a former Brownfields site, will form the basis of a 40R district and trigger a one-time payment of \$350,000 plus \$3,000 for every new home. Officials in Dartmouth say the affordable homes in the district will bring the town closer to the 10 percent level needed to avoid future comprehensive permit applications under Chapter 40B.

In Chelsea, a 2.7-acre district within a half-mile of City Hall, the

main commercial district and an MBTA commuter rail station was approved for designation by the City Council, clearing the way for a total of 125 residential homes in several different locations, the majority of them affordable.

Several other cities and towns are actively investigating Chapter 40R. One town, Lunenburg, has received preliminary approval from DHCD for a 9-acre 40R district on the site of a drive-in movie theater, with bus service available and near the Fitchburg commuter rail station. The smart growth zoning here will allow 204 multi-family homes.

Kingston, Somerville, and Bolton are among other communities also moving ahead in the process of establishing 40R districts.

If every community considering 40R adopted a district, over 7,000 new homes would be created, according to Concord Square Development Co.

The density requirement for 40R districts is 8 units per acre for single family homes, 12 units per acre for two- or three-family residences, and 20 units per acre for condominiums and apartments.

More information on Chapter 40R and 40S is available at [www.mass.gov/ocd](http://www.mass.gov/ocd).



## EPA scores with smart growth rating system

It's a common question and a sensible one: what is smart growth?

Any definition would include redevelopment of land, a mix of uses, a revitalization of town centers and downtowns, walkability, concentrated development and an orientation near transit where possible.

But the US Environmental Protection Agency has a new way to test out whether a proposed development is smart growth, or if local policies and zoning will deliver desired results.

The EPA compiled a set of smart growth scorecards and rating systems being used in communities across the country, and identified the tools that help cities and towns choose the strategies for beneficial growth.

Some scorecards help com-

munities understand how the local regulatory climate impacts development patterns. Others are designed to determine if



proposed new developments meet community-defined smart growth goals.

The compilation is available at  
<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/scorecards/index.htm>

Included are scorecards from Vermont, Colorado, New Jersey, Cleveland, and the Smart Growth Leadership Institute. Also in the compilation are two Massachusetts rating systems, based in large part on the Sustainable Development Principles listed by the Office for Commonwealth Development: the South-eastern Massachusetts Vision 2020 Smart

Growth Audit, and the Cape Cod Growth Management Audit.

To be added to the compilation soon: Commonwealth Capital, the statewide system for screening \$500 million in annual grants and loans, so that capital infrastructure is steered to cities and towns engaged in smart growth. The Commonwealth Capital scorecard features 27 initiatives in eight categories: planning, zoning for compact development, expanding housing opportunities, redeveloping sites and buildings, conserving natural resources, water policy, working natural landscapes and the general promotion of sustainable development.

Nearly 280 cities and towns have filled out the Commonwealth Capital scorecard over the last two years of the program.

## Parking Polices Reconsidered Across The US

Parking is a hot topic for communities revitalizing downtowns and town centers, or supporting transit-oriented development.

Many communities are finding that when it comes to parking, less is more – that is, minimum parking requirements of, for example, two spaces per home in residential development, don't make sense for many locations. From Pasadena, Calif., to Arlington, Va., districts are exploring new concepts such as shared parking and maximum parking requirements.

The online planning newsletter PLANETizen recently concluded a three-part series on parking, with a look at on-site parking requirements

and how such rules might be modified in the future. The article is available at <http://www.planetizen.com/node/19246>.

Other resources on parking include "Parking Spaces, Community

Places: Finding the Balance through Smart Growth Solutions," available at <http://www.epa.gov/dced/parking.htm>; and "Parking Alternatives: Making Way for Urban Infill and Brownfields Redevelopment," available at <http://www.smartgrowth.org/pdf/PRKGDE04.pdf>.



*Shared parking facility Photo courtesy of www.pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden*

Previous editions of the *Smart Growth Newsline* are available at <http://www.mass.gov/ocd> in the [Smart Growth Newsline Archive](#)

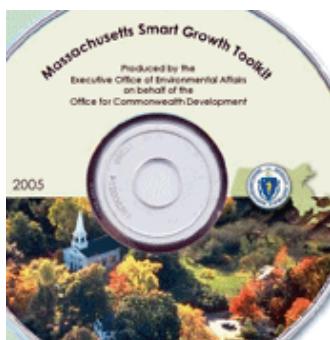
## SMART GROWTH CALENDAR FOR JUNE 2006

**June 8-9th** Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors 2006 Annual Conference at the Doubletree Hotel In Lowell MA. Please contact Steve Costello at 781-762-1240 x164 or email scostello@ci.norwood.ma.us if you have any questions.

**June 20th** FREE WORKSHOP *Massachusetts Highway Design for Planners*. For more information please contact Elisa Wright by phone at 774.760.0495 or via Email at elisa@arc-of-innovation.org

**June 20th @ 2pm** Ashmont TOD Groundbreaking Ceremony. Please contact the Office for Commonwealth Development for more information.

**June 27th** South Field celebration, marking first land transfer at South Weymouth Naval Air Station, 11-1 LNR Property Corp., South Shore Tri-Town Development Corp.



Upcoming Workshops with a Toolkit-related session are:

**6/15** Essex County Forum-MVPC, Gould Barn, Topsfield Village Center Zoning 7:00PM–9:00PM for more information [http://www.mass.gov/envir/docs/sgtk\\_mvpc\\_flyer.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/envir/docs/sgtk_mvpc_flyer.pdf)

**6/21** The Stormwater Sessions, Dean College, Franklin LID topics in morning session 8:00AM–5PM

**9/21** Wetland Regulations in MA., Boston LID session 8:00AM–5PM

For more information on the workshops or events related to the Massachusetts Smart Growth Toolkit please visit <http://www.mass.gov/envir/sgtk.htm>

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For more information on the Smart Growth Hotline, a publication of Office for Commonwealth Development, please contact Anthony Flint, Director of Smart Growth Education at (617) 573-1395 or [ocd@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:ocd@massmail.state.ma.us)

Andrew Gottlieb, Chief of Commonwealth Development

The mission of the Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development (OCD) is to care for the built and natural environment by promoting sustainable development through the integration of energy, environmental, housing, and transportation agencies' policies, programs and regulations. OCD will encourage the coordination and cooperation of all agencies, invest public funds wisely in smart growth and equitable development, give priority to investments that will deliver living wage jobs, transit access, housing, open space, and community-serving enterprises, and be guided by a set of sustainable development principles.